

OFFICIAL FEEDBACK FORM

WORKSHOP TITLE	Young Minds, Real Talk: Nutrition, Health, and What They Really Care About
WORKSHOP DATE	Saturday, 14 December 2024 08:30 GMT +07:00
CONVENED BY	Faith Richelle B. Sy
EVENT LANGUAGE	English with translation to Khmer, Burmese, Mongolian, Thai, Laos, Vietnamese
HOST CITY	Bangkok, Thailand
GEOGRAPHIC SCOPE	East Asia Region covering Cambodia, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand, Vietnam
WORKSHOP EVENT PAGE	https://nutritiondialogues.org/dialogue/55270/



The outcomes from Children's workshops will contribute to developing and identifying the most urgent and powerful ways to improve nutrition for all, with a focus on children and young people. Each Workshop contributes in four distinct ways:

- Published as publicly available PDFs on the Nutrition Dialogues Portal
- Available as public data on the Nutrition Dialogues Portal "Explore Feedback" page
- Available publicly within a .xls file alongside all Feedback Form data for advanced analysis
- Synthesised into reports that cover which nutrition challenges are faced, what actions are urgently needed and how should these be taken forward - particular, in advance of the Nutrition for Growth Summit in Paris, March 2025.

SECTION ONE: PARTICIPATION

TOTAL NUMBER OF PARTICIPANTS

1

PARTICIPATION BY AGE RANGE

2 12-15

13 16-18

PARTICIPATION BY GENDER

8 Female

7 Male

0 Other/Prefer not to say

ADDITIONAL DETAIL ON PARTICIPATION DIVERSITY

These children are part of Young Minds CAMP (Child-led Actions, Mobilization and Partnerships) which is a regional child participation platform and leadership academy for east asia region. Hence, they are coming from varied backgrounds, some from ethnic minorities, urban, rural, different religious groups and mostly leading and representing the most vulnerable groups.

SECTION TWO: FRAMING

The discussions in the workshop are directly linked to the insights and findings from the recently conducted child-led research of the Young Mind CAMPers, which serves as the foundation of our dialogue on the pressing challenges facing East Asia region. Their research was entitled Young Minds Shaping Climate Action and Disaster Mitigation for a Sustainable Future. This region, home to over 354 million children, is the most disaster-prone and hardest hit by climate and disaster risks in the Asia-Pacific. Between 2016 and 2021 alone, approximately 19 million children in East Asia were displaced due to severe flooding, storms, and droughts. The 2021 UNICEF report, “The Climate Crisis is a Child Rights Crisis,” underscores the alarming reality that children in six East Asian countries are exposed to high Children’s Climate Risk Index (CCRI) scores. There were 28 young researchers, aged 12 to 18, from Cambodia, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam, who have personally felt the impacts of climate-related disasters—ranging from heat waves and prolonged heavy rains to devastating floods and landslides. These events have not only disrupted our lives but have also affected our education, our families’ livelihoods, and led to numerous health challenges. Noting the impact on health, nutrition, and livelihood - these were the basis and framing of the nutrition dialogue which was strongly anchored on their recently conducted research. But at the same time, they wanted to explore and discuss further the status of children and young people in school as most of their time are spent in school and access to nutritious foods are also a foreseen challenge.

SECTION THREE: CHILDREN'S WORKSHOP OUTCOMES

CHALLENGES

Limited Access to Nutritious Food: Many households in mountainous areas struggle to afford healthy, nutritious food due to large family sizes and low incomes. This leads to malnutrition, especially among children. Additionally, climate change has disrupted local farming systems, making it harder to grow traditional crops and access fresh, nutritious produce, further limiting food availability.

Unhealthy Eating Habits: The consumption of inexpensive, unhygienic food from street vendors and unhealthy junk food at schools is common. These foods lack essential nutrients and contribute to poor nutrition and long-term health problems. With the added pressures of climate change on food security, families are increasingly forced to rely on cheaper, less nutritious options, worsening the nutrition crisis.

Impact of Child Marriage, Poverty, and Climate Change: Malnutrition is especially prevalent among children born to young mothers, often as a result of child marriage. These children face health problems due to poor nutrition and limited access to education. Climate change also exacerbates these issues by impacting farming practices in vulnerable areas, reducing crop yields, and increasing food insecurity. This cycle of poverty, poor nutrition, and environmental stress further hinders their development and well-being.

Sustainability Challenges in Farming: Climate change is making traditional farming methods in mountainous areas less viable. Extreme weather events such as floods, droughts, and heatwaves have disrupted crop production, leading to food shortages and further exacerbating malnutrition. To combat this, sustainable farming practices that are resilient to climate change—such as growing drought-resistant crops, improving water management, and adopting climate-smart agriculture—are essential to ensure a stable food supply and better nutrition for local communities.

URGENT RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ACTION

Grow More Food at Home: Teach families to grow vegetables and raise animals to ensure they always have enough food, even when the weather is tough.

Teach Healthy Eating and Improve School Meals: Offer fun lessons in schools and communities about the importance of eating healthy foods instead of junk food. Ensure that all students have access to nutritious food that supports their growth and learning.

Stop Child Marriage: Work to stop child marriage so that young mothers and children can grow up healthy and get the education they need.

Help During Disasters: Provide healthy emergency food and medical help to families affected by floods, storms, or droughts.

Involve Young Leaders: Encourage young people to lead projects that teach healthy eating and sustainable farming in their communities.

AREAS OF DIVERGENCE

Access to Nutritious Food: In countries with more limited access to resources, such as rural or mountainous areas, the concern around affordability and availability of nutritious food might have been more pronounced. In contrast, young people from more urbanized areas might have focused more on the prevalence of unhealthy eating habits, such as the consumption of fast food or food from street vendors.

Impact of Climate Change: Given that climate change affects different regions in varying ways, views on its impact on food security and farming practices could have diverged.

Cultural and Socioeconomic Factors: The challenge of child marriage and its impact on nutrition may have varied based on regional cultural and social norms. In some countries, child marriage might be a more significant issue influencing nutrition and health, while in others, other factors such as poverty or education access may have been more pressing.

Solutions and Recommendations: Divergence might have also occurred in the proposed solutions. Youth from different regions may have suggested more region-specific solutions, such as climate-smart farming techniques in areas affected by extreme weather or better school meal programs where access to food in schools is an issue.

Overall, while common concerns about nutrition, health, and the need for sustainable solutions emerged, the way these issues were framed and the urgency of certain solutions would have likely differed depending on the local context and experiences of the young leaders involved in the dialogue.

OVERALL SUMMARY

The nutrition dialogue workshop brought together 15 passionate young leaders, aged 12 to 18, from six countries in the East Asia region: Cambodia, Laos, Mongolia, Myanmar, Thailand, and Vietnam. This event marked the culmination of months of preparation, including in-country consultations and child-led research, providing the participants with a platform to share their insights on nutrition, food security, and the pressing issues affecting their communities. The young leaders were eager to not only discuss what they had learned but also explore how they could drive meaningful, sustainable change in their communities.

From the beginning, the workshop fostered an atmosphere of inclusivity and empowerment. The participants, who have been part of the Young Minds CAMP (Child-led Actions, Mobilization, and Partnerships) since April 2024, were excited to use their voices to address the critical issues surrounding nutrition. Speaking from personal experience, they shared the challenges they had faced with food insecurity, poor nutrition, and the intersectionality with climate change, poverty, and social problems like child marriage. These lived realities shaped their discussions and fueled their recommendations for sustainable solutions.

The workshop provided a collaborative space for the young leaders, where ideas flowed freely, and everyone's voice was valued. A common theme that emerged was the significant impact of climate change on food security. Many participants spoke about the challenges posed by extreme weather events—floods, droughts, and storms—that were making it harder for families to grow enough food and access nutritious options, especially in rural and mountainous areas where agriculture is the primary livelihood. These disruptions were not just threatening food availability, but also affecting families' access to healthy, diverse diets.

Sustainable farming practices emerged as a key solution. The young leaders emphasized the importance of climate-smart agriculture to ensure resilience in food production. They advocated for providing local farmers with the knowledge, tools, and resources to adapt to climate changes, from growing drought-resistant crops to practicing sustainable farming techniques that work with nature, not against it. Many participants shared positive examples from their communities, where these practices had improved both food security and the nutritional quality of available food.

Another critical issue raised was the impact of child marriage on nutrition. Participants from countries where child marriage remains prevalent discussed the challenges faced by young mothers who often lack access to proper nutrition and health services. They highlighted how child marriage leads to a cycle of poverty and malnutrition, limiting opportunities for education and leading to poor health outcomes. The young leaders agreed that addressing child marriage was essential for improving nutrition and health, as it would allow young people, especially girls, to stay in school, access better healthcare, and contribute to healthier communities.

Unhealthy eating habits, especially the consumption of cheap, unhealthy street food and junk food, also surfaced as a major concern. The participants discussed how these foods, often more accessible and affordable than nutritious alternatives, contribute to malnutrition and obesity. A key recommendation was to improve school meal programs, ensuring students have access to nutritious, locally sourced food that supports their health and educational needs. Additionally, raising awareness about healthy eating in schools and communities emerged as an important step toward empowering children and parents to make healthier food choices.

The workshop underscored the importance of C&Y-led awareness campaigns and advocacy. The young leaders were clear that nutrition is not only a health issue but a human rights issue, and that youth must be at the forefront of driving change. They expressed their desire to influence policies, raise awareness, and help create more sustainable, equitable food systems. Their commitment to the cause was evident, as they recognized that change starts with them, and that their voices have the power to shape the future of nutrition in their communities.

Overall, the workshop highlighted the urgency of addressing nutrition, climate change, and social issues, while showcasing the innovative ideas and solutions that young people can offer.

SECTION FOUR: PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT & METHOD

PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

The nutrition dialogue workshop exemplified the Principles of Engagement by fostering inclusivity, participation, and empowerment among 15 young leaders from six East Asian countries. It provided a platform for them to share their experiences and insights on nutrition, food security, and climate change. The workshop emphasized active youth involvement in decision-making, promoting accountability, transparency, and equity. Sustainable solutions, such as climate-smart farming and improved school meal programs, were prioritized. It also focused on building the participants' capacity to lead change in their communities, reinforcing the importance of children voices in shaping future nutrition policies and practices.

METHOD AND SETTING

The workshop was conducted online, using a participatory methodology anchored in the participants' child-led research and discussions with peers. They shared photos and told the stories behind them, enriching the dialogue with personal experiences. Child safeguarding standards were rigorously upheld by creating a safe, respectful virtual environment and providing emotional support throughout the sessions.

ADVICE FOR OTHER CONVENORS

For other convenors holding a Nutrition Dialogues Children's Workshop, I recommend prioritizing inclusivity and creating a safe, respectful space where every child feels heard. Use participatory methods, such as child-led research and peer discussions, to empower young leaders. Incorporate multimedia tools, like photo-sharing, to make the dialogue more engaging and personal. Ensure child safeguarding standards are a top priority, providing emotional support when needed.

FEEDBACK FORM: ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS